

ROCKY MOUNTAIN REFLECTIONS

CHALLENGING INJUSTICE



VOLUME 2, FALL 2011

Cover Art

Rachel Curry

Mask of White

Letter From the Editors

Once again, we are proud to present the fourth issue of *Rocky Mountain Reflections*, Colorado Mountain College's regional literary journal. Showcasing the tremendous literary and visual talents of community members and CMC students, staff and faculty, *Rocky Mountain Reflections* displays the full diversity of people making art in the High Country. The Editorial Board has received some outstanding work and continues to marvel at the collective talents here at our College.

In addition to the regular submissions, our special "Challenging Injustice" section presents the six winning entries from the Common Reader Art and Creative Writing Contest. Entries to the contest were so remarkable that we are publishing eight contributions in addition to the six winning entries. The Contest was the culminating event of this year's Common Reader Program centered on Carlotta Walls Lanier's memoir *A Mighty Long Way: My Journey to Justice at Little Rock Central High School* (2009). Contest guidelines required contributors to reflect on the theme of "challenging injustice," an idea that reverberates through Lanier's first-person account. Finding an original way to respond to *A Mighty Long Way* was no easy task at all, considering that President Bill Clinton wrote the foreword to this brave work. The Contest winners are a tremendous contribution to the journal, which itself has come a long way indeed.

This particular issue grew out of more than one hundred submissions. Short fiction and poetry are presented by writers whose styles differ greatly, ranging from prose to poesy, from the comic to the lyrical. The poets in this issue of RMR are especially immersed in externalities of all kinds: ecosystems, Rocky Mountain towns, and other higher states like *satori* and human benevolence. Please enjoy this fourth publication of *Rocky Mountain Reflections*, a collection of some truly impressive creative voices. We encourage your own submissions.

Sincerely,

Colin Carman, Ph.D.

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Challenging Injustice Contest

Creative Writing

First Place/ *Conor Ross Laing* /*Silence*

Silence is gilded,
A mask that hides the
Rotting wood and
Rusting metal.
A tool that seems
Very quiet, and yet
Able to deafen the
Creaks and groans,
Pleading, crying for
Justice; for a chance
To show the lovely
Metal and wood work.
Alas, I cannot hear,
I am silent; and so
The maggots and moisture
That eat away at true beauty
Stand no wrath from me.
I am fixated on the seemingly
Golden mask. I feel no guilt.
My soul at ease. And yet, it
Is not. As injustice prevails,
I cannot ignore it for long.
I look into the dead eyes of
The mask and I come to understand,
Understand that I am as guilty
As the termites and water that
Create the deterioration. After all,
I, and everyone silent as I,
Made this mask to soothe our own spirits,

Caesar's unable to see truth.
 We made the gild with our silence.
 With increased quietness, the mask
 Strengthens. Every injustice stems
 From it, and thus from me.
 Yes, I look into those eyes
 Of my creation, and I feel
 Despair. And yet I Hope.
 With every whisper that
 Passes the lips, like a cool
 Breeze on a miserably hot day,
 And with every challenge
 Given, and every disdain
 Proclaimed with a roar
 We crack the mask.
 And soon, it shall disappear.
 And no longer will the wood rot,
 And metal rust.
 And no longer will
 Silence hinder Justice.

Second Place

/ Janna Burk /

Carlotta

As I walk past that building on my way to school, I look up at it in awe. It is so big and impressive. I feel a yearning to be able to look inside and see if it is as grand on the inside as it is on the outside. But I keep moving along. *It's not for me.*

Today I signed my name on the paper being passed around class. Maybe my yearning will come true someday. But I must hurry home today. The neighborhood baseball game starts soon. My team needs me. *I love baseball.*

The letter came to my house. I have been picked to attend. I tell Mother and Daddy that I signed up to attend Central High School. I am dreaming of the days ahead. I picture myself and all my new friends laughing together and enjoying each other's company. I hope I can keep up academically. I will work extra hard to learn everything I can. *I feel happy.*

It's time to leave for school. I'm glad I'm walking with my friends today because I'm nervous. I love my new school outfit and I love the smell of new school supplies in the crook of my arm. I'm so ready to learn everything. I'm going to work harder than ever. *I feel excited and a little bit scared.*

What is all the commotion up there? Why are there so many people around the school? Surely it wouldn't be because of us? I continue to move forward slowly with my friends. The law says that it is our right to attend. It's the Law. What is so wrong with us going to school here and why are they using that hateful "n" word? *I feel confused.*

My bodyguard ignores me as we walk to each class. I just dodged another student trying to kick me and I still feel sick when I think of the big spitwad that landed on me yesterday. Where are all the lawmakers now? Don't they see what is happening to me? I need to hurry and get to class. There is so much I need to learn still. *I feel tired.*

Mother and Daddy are worried. They don't say much, but I know. The phone rings a lot and mother just hangs it up quickly. I am worried, too. Maybe I shouldn't be doing this. Maybe this is just not worth the effort. But I can't let my

family down or my friends. Everyone is counting on me to make a difference. I wonder what that really means? *Can I do this?*

The big jolt nearly knocked me out of my bed and now I smell smoke. What's happening? Where's Mother and my sisters? Someone needs to get Daddy! Quick! There is a hole in our roof! Why? What did I do to make people hate me so much? Everyone is safe (deep breath) but I feel so heavy with guilt. Daddy is scared. I can see it in his eyes. Maybe I am just a selfish girl to continue doing this. *What have I done?*

I'm gritting my teeth. I am doing this. I will finish this. It's almost over. Then I will be able to breathe again. I will leave here forever and I won't think about this ever again. I'm going on with my life. *I feel determined.*

The principal hands me my diploma and shakes my hand. My heart is racing but I am standing tall and proud so that no one knows how nervous I am. I did it. I did it in spite of them. My family is out there supporting me as they always have. I have a good education behind me; it's time to move forward again and never look back. *I'm glad it's over.*

The bus is getting ready to leave. I have my belongings already loaded and my family is waiting to leave the station until they can no longer see me in the window. I love them so much. I can rest now and think about my future. I'm not going to think about Central High School. Not for a very long time – maybe never again. I'm looking ahead now. *I feel hopeful.*

Third Place

/ Timothy J. Warrens /

The Power of Pride and Perseverance

What intrigues me most about Carlotta Walls Lanier's memoir, *A Mighty Long Way*, is how the story of one teenage girl and her difficult path to academic achievement can have such great significance on a nation. In her book, Carlotta shares stories of her struggles with injustice and discrimination, the perseverance and pride necessary to overcome those struggles, and the rewards for following through with what she believed to be righteous and true. Even as a youth, whose only desire was to lead a normal life, she was determined to achieve the success every person deserves. Just as she had many positive influences to look to throughout her life, we need more people like her to have encouraging effects on the nation.

Other than being in the national spotlight during some of the most cherished years of childhood, Carlotta could be considered just as normal as any teenager. She was raised in a loving, middle-class family where she acquired the necessary characteristics to succeed in a world that was not always on her side. It was at home and through extended family members that she found the courage and motivation to continue through the hard times and overcome adversity. Her parents always stressed the importance of getting the highest quality of education as possible; and this quality was clearly instilled in her mind as shown by her determination to achieve nothing less. The importance and quality of education is often taken for granted. Carlotta's story serves as a great example that receiving a good education is not only for the privileged or distinguished, but is the right of every human being; and unless we take control of that right by putting it to best possible use, we will be wasting the time and efforts of our nation as well as ourselves.

By holding ourselves up to certain expectations, such as national expectations, family expectations, and personal expectations, we obtain a certain pride. Carlotta harbored this pride and used it effectively throughout her exemplified life, as we too should learn how to do. As a black girl in the 1950s, there were many national expectations of her, which she rose to meet and even exceed fearlessly. This was attributed to the amount of pride and expectations she drew from her family. Her father, along with both of her grandfathers, took an immense amount of pride in

their work, which reflected on her when it came to schoolwork. Her family's expectations of her to do well in school pushed her to constantly strive for better results. She had very high personal expectations as well. The only reason she wanted to go to Central High School was that she believed it was the best in Little Rock; to accept less would be considered a failure in her mind. And after graduating, she sought the most reputable colleges that could offer her the best possible education. Just as Carlotta has used pride to go above and beyond her expectations in life, we need to take pride in what we do, search for the highest quality cornerstone to build our future upon, and accept that no one is responsible for our failure or success but ourselves.

Carlotta felt it her rightful duty to get the highest quality education possible and never let anything hold her from that. She endured endless humiliating and discriminatory acts throughout the four years she spent at Central, ranging from being spat upon to her house being bombed, with her father and childhood friend being falsely accused of the act. Still, she was determined to finish what she started at Central and never let these events hold her back; partly due to all the encouragement she received from her family, but mostly because of her own strict standards of success. In an interview with the *Arkansas Gazette*, her father is recorded saying, "Only one thing crossed my mind about the whole thing. She had a right to go there." She knew what she needed to do, what she had a legal right to do, so she did it. Like a true leader of her time, she fought for justice, freedom, and equality - qualities I wish the leaders of our country would fight for more often.

What a contrast in terms of leadership: Carlotta, a teenage black girl, versus the traditional, aged white male of governor Faubus. Carlotta had many positive influences and learned many important, life-long lessons in the days she spent at Central High School. Unfortunately, one of those lessons was of the injustice and ignorance displayed by a select few of our governmental leaders. Particularly, the judge and prosecutor who falsely sentenced her friend Herbert to five years in prison, and governor Faubus who sided with the segregationists and deliberately defied President Eisenhower's direct orders. Carlotta never let these ignorant persons or their unjust behavior deter her from her goals, but she was deeply saddened, as we all should be that people in positions of power and respect could use their power so improperly. Although she experienced many negative impacts from the public figures surrounding her time at Central, more important to her were the positive influences she had throughout that time. People like U.S. District Court judge Ronald Davies who was not swayed by the segregationists but performed his

"constitutional duty and obligation" to integrate Central, Thurgood Marshall, who was constantly involved fighting for civil rights cases including *Brown v. Board of Education*, President Eisenhower, who used his power to enforce the nation's position that all have equal rights, and Daisy Bates, who was her most influential advisor and strongest public defender. We need more people with these types of qualities - people worthy of respect - to be in positions of power, not corrupt politicians that side with special interest groups.

Enduring more than what most have to just to get a High School Diploma, Carlotta let nothing excuse her from obtaining the education she desired and rightfully deserved. She had the help of many brave individuals, and despite some minor setbacks from a few persons who abuse their power, she persevered and succeeded. Supported by a loving, caring family that surrounded her with strong educational values, she led with courage, determination, and pride, the necessary foundations for a better tomorrow.

/ Laurel McHargue /

A Mother Knows Injustice

“*They will never appreciate what you have done . . . what you could do . . .*”
but what I’ve done is right, Mom; it’s what I believe in.

I stand alone, not to be a martyr (I’m too young to die!), but to light a fire,
to imagine that others might stand,
and stand,
and stand,
until they are no longer alone

“Friends” whisper with you, but retreat to dark spaces when the spotlight scorches
the speaker . . .
and lock you out

“*They see you as a threat . . .*”
to a system senselessly broken?
to the way “things have always been”?
to loss of ignorance?

“She does not represent me!” you whisper, but you know that I do;
I know that you are afraid, or, perhaps,
just blind

I asked if you disagreed, opened the door, gave you the floor . . .
but you kept your seat,
slammed the door

Ignorance is bliss . . . for the ignorant

“*You have my mother’s **spirit** . . .*” equals *essence*, equals *soul*, equals *life-force* . . . not
death.

I loved my Nana; I am honored.

It is always easier to retreat than to fight, yet why is this a battleground?
Who . . . what . . . will die?

And at what cost, this battle?
The loss of a dream, of hope,
of a chance to lunge onto lawns more lush?

Money has strings, and puppets bow down.

“*Protect yourself, my darlin’ girl . . .*”
Too late for that, Mom

Prepare for loneliness before you stand alone,
but do not be consumed in your own passion’s blaze

“*They are blind to the gifts you have to offer . . . they deserve what they get.*”

I know, Mom.
I love you, too.

/ Aaron Childers /

World

While drifting through thought

I quietly made my point

We arrived at the access while nobody was watching

I handed you a moment and for an instant all of the foot prints made sense

Why are my thoughts so subtle?

It's the way the neighborhood acts after 6pm during the summer days when a dog barks in the distance. Your neighbor's car slowly cruises the street looking out for any young ones at play. A lawn mower fires up in the distance and the smell of cut grass hits your nose

All of these senses can't block why my thoughts return to days past when we could claim to be happy

I dance around these subjects that make no sense

Yet, in my mind's library, these subjects speak loudly and they tell a story

Don't fracture my peace because it's all I have, but if you want it, take it

Maybe this will resonate into bringing my distances closer

As I stroll through the old neighborhood I become lost. Although it's old, I only recognize it from when I paid attention

I only saw it from my youth's eye, a time when we were all impressionable

I was a vagrant displaced by my own apathy on grounds of indecisive action

We all have internal struggles; we all view the world as an outsider looking in. Sometimes I feel like a windshield wiper on the outside of balloon bounding back and forth, peering into a world that is in closed within the balloon

If you look off into the distance, you can see your brother dealing with issues that could only be passed through genetics. Watch as your mother tries to grasp why her son is inflicted with these ghostly visions. "...is it my fault" she asks herself along with everyone around her. It very well could be, but you can't see what biological make up, a concoction of internal chemicals will do to your children. "Did you take your medication today?" shouldn't be on the list of questions to ask somebody who is close to you. "Where the hell is my medication?" Right here with a glass of water. Saturate yourself.

Sunday. The air is now crisp and the leaves fall with our ever so vibrant colors of yellow, orange and red with a back splash of pine green. You see a neighbor raking leaves off of the still green grass and the smell of organic decomposition hits your nose. The neighborhood kids toss a football back and forth and a car slams on its brakes as the ball rolls into the street. What an inconvenience

The sky is blue. Today, I still don't recognize the neighborhood even though lately I have been paying attention. So my footsteps echo, echo, echo, echo. Hollow

If I remove my hat will I still be invited in or will I remain stuck to the outside of this balloon?

These questions still won't answer why this tribe we call our family magnifies our situation on the ground

If I sit on top of this mountain for a while, maybe I'll figure it out and I'll come down back to your level so we can discuss the mark on my back from my last heart attack

If I'm not marked by something then just give me anything so that I can hold this impression of you and me and the world around us

Distant memories unfold like the crisp linen that was placed on your bed when you were a child. Days spent with no worry of if the visions would cloud these thoughts that your brother claimed were his own

A soothing touch that helped you navigate these complex waters are forever gone to a closing door of hospitals, psychiatrists and bills

Look around, but don't look too closely because you just may witness a loved one slowly lose their grip on reality

Sometime in January, or is it February? The way the snow falls on to the leafless trees, clinging to the branches like a toddler on her mother's leg. I see the snow pile in our yards so that everything is white with patches of color sticking out here and there. The animals move slowly to conserve energy. The neighbors haven't driven by in a while, the roads must be awful. Do take care.

Maybe our reflections will return, but will you recognize me?

I can't keep this up because I don't know you anymore and I'm afraid if I move from this spot I'll disintegrate

Why are you crying now? Because you talk, but I don't understand the language. The words are familiar but I just don't know what you're saying

In a further off distance, there's your family trying to decide on a decision that is out of their control, a decision that was made without them in mind. Watch as your mother searches the face of everyone she meets for an answer that will never come, along with the patience.

So now they tell me it's sometime in spring. For the world it means new life and creation, but for me, well, I'm just here slowly fading into obscurity...

/ Deb Quinn /

Another Way

Someone had to do it, so why not me? All those nights, listening to the footsteps in the hall, hearing the key in the lock of my bedroom door, I'd think about it. My friend Wayne was good at stealing. Every week he'd lift the Billboard Top 20 45's from the store on Concord Pike. So I asked him to get me a gun. He never asked why.

The stolen gun was small and heavy - just the right fit for my hand. I didn't get extra bullets; I was sure that one would be enough. No practice. It'd be close range.

That night I was in my normal position, on my stomach with my hands tucked under my belly, facing the far wall, pretending to be asleep. Dad always pulled out one of my arms to roll me over onto my back. That night at the end of that arm was the gun, its metal a comforting cold against my body. I had no other feeling, no fear, no terror. I was very calm and I was ready.

I never thought about consequences. To me it was just an end to something horrible, something that had to be ended. I never thought of the possibility that I'd be blamed, that people might not believe my story, that Mom would deny it. What did she know? I was doing it as much for her as for me.

That night, when the key turned in the lock, my heart began to pound with anticipation. I listened as Dad came into my room, shut the door, and turned on the light by my bed as he sat next to me. There was only silence for what seemed like hours. Then it started, his heavy breathing. He rubbed my back and butt, yet I felt only my finger on the trigger. I was going to aim for his heart.

My head was still turned to the wall opposite him and I opened my eyes. He took my arm with one hand and started to roll me over. He'd be surprised to see my eyes open, I thought. He placed his other hand on my shoulder and as my head turned, I caught his gaze and looked right at him. Seeing that drunken leer, mixed with his sick passion, stilled all my fear.

As my hand emerged from under my body, I seemed to be watching someone else. With the gun just inches from his chest, I pulled the trigger. I was so calm, so steady. Even the noise of the blast didn't faze me, my eyes holding his as his look changed to disbelief, then pain, then nothing.

His body fell across me and I was able to push it away. I still felt nothing as I heard my sister and my mother running to the room. Most of the blood was underneath Dad, but it was spreading over my sheets. They saw it and screamed, “What have you done?”

The rest of that night was a blur of sirens, lights, interrogations. I wasn't permitted to stay home, and was confined in a girl's detention center. It was there that I saw the newspaper headline, blaring: “13 Year Old Girl Kills Father, Claims Incest, Mother Denies It.”

I was still numb at my first court appearance a few days later, sitting alone at the defense table in my orange jumpsuit and shackles. I listened to the prosecutor saying something to the judge about cold-blooded murder and treating me as an adult. The prosecutor was about my father's age, and I hated him. The judge appointed a public defender to represent me.

She was young and pretty, and when we later met alone for the first time, she wanted to hear the whole story. Calmly and matter-of-factly, I told her everything I remembered. She listened and said, “I believe you.” Then she asked if I would tell that story to a jury and I agreed.

At the trial I told everything. I finally got angry under questioning, partly because I had to watch my mother weeping in the front row, but mostly because I couldn't contain the hostility any longer. I described our family life in detail: the drinking, the rage, the dishes smashing, the beatings, and the years of molestation.

When my mother later testified that she had no idea about the incest, I jumped up and screamed, “You didn't want to know. You never could do anything to help us. You just always continued with life as usual, as if nothing ever happened. I had to shoot him; it was the only way.”

My older sister Penny took the stand. I hadn't seen her or spoken to her since the shooting and didn't know she was going to testify. My hatred for Penny, the big boss, as I called her, was almost as great as my hatred for Dad, and I glared at her as she took the stand. She was scared, I could tell. But something happened that day in court. She looked over at me and for the first time ever I saw that she cared. And then she repeated my story; my Dad had subjected her to the same sexual abuse. She cried. Several members of the jury cried. The judge was visibly shaken. I cried.

Then my younger brother Robbie was called to testify, ten years old and so insecure. All he said was he was glad I did what I did, that he didn't like being around Dad and he wished I could come home.

Mom had to be carried from the courtroom after she collapsed. I was not convicted of any crime. After that, the three of us were in foster care, and we stuck together. We became a family.

That was almost fifty years ago. Mom never recovered and we visited her occasionally at the sanitarium. I felt nothing towards her for many years after the incident, removing her from my thoughts. My sister and brother and I did recover. Even though, after our initial placement, we were apart more than we were together, the bonds between us strengthened over the years. We always discussed with each other how our new families were different from our old one. Throughout that time, we had the love and support of a very special social worker who made sure we were all in counseling for years and that we got to spend as much time as possible with each other. By the time we went to college, the wounds were healed. The scars were still there, but hardly noticeable.

How can a thirteen year old live with the fact she killed her father? Someone had to stop him; that's what I kept saying. But it was those two women, the public defender and the social worker, who taught me how to live with what I had done. They told me that killing was wrong, that there is a justice system, like it or not, that can deal with these issues, and after all, the justice system worked for me, didn't it? The jury hadn't blamed me.

Taking the law into my own hands was wrong, these women told me. They said that telling my story at the time would have been the better path, better than denying or hiding feelings or pretending it didn't happen, better than ignoring the pain until it was too great to bear. They taught me how to forgive myself, my Dad and my Mom, not in any way condoning our actions or inactions, but letting go of the resulting bitterness, anger, resentment and guilt. And they suggested that I start telling my story as a means of continuing to heal and of helping others.

So that's what I did. I also raised children of my own. And I have had much joy in my life.

It would have been easier, at age thirteen, to stay with that hostility and rage that surfaced during the trial, but those two women, the public defender and the social worker, wouldn't let me. They guided me, nurtured me, loved me, held me, and gently led me through that darkness. They refused to let my life be forever adversely affected by the actions of one sick man. They didn't give up.

I met a lot of people through this story-telling. Much of my joy has come when a child or a teacher or a parent told me that my story made a difference for them. But there were so many others who were not able to let go of their sense of

injustice and their desire for revenge, people who suffered some harm, some wrong that they considered forever unforgiveable. Often they were bitter and unhappy and could not see how their attitude kept them trapped in darkness. Someone needed to keep telling them that it didn't have to be that way, and not give up on them. Someone had to do it, why not me?

/ Kelli McCall /

Sopita Para Ti

“Hola, Tia Gringa!” Luis called out from behind the safe shadows of his cracked mud hut.

“Hola, Sobrino,” I teased back giggling. But in my mind, I realized that after eight months as a Peace Corps volunteer in Panama, this five-year-old's greeting was my first real sign of acceptance. I was family. Could it be I was finally home?

In the coming months, I realized that I was seeing less and less of little Luis. When I asked about him, I was told by his family that he was babysitting, or ill, or just unavailable. Each excuse seemed to be forced more than the last through downward facing eyes and guilty glances. When I decided to investigate, I was not prepared for what I would find.

Behind the walls of the smoke-filled kitchen, I found Luis lying on a homemade bamboo bed. The remaining hair on his round head had lightened to a dusty blond. The family joked about their ‘lil’ gringo’ as his bellybutton pushed out from his swollen stomach; his swollen feet and hands looked alien to me next to his stick-thin arms.

“What’s wrong with him?” I gasped trying unsuccessfully to gain composure.

“Los brujos; the witches,” they replied matter-of-factly.

“Did you take him to the doctor?” I asked.

“Si. We took him to the curandero,” they said assuredly. “He is the best medicine man in the area.”

I tossed and turned that night... and the next... and the next... and the next: Shouldn't I respect their customs and beliefs? Didn't Peace Corps say that what we do must be sustainable? What is sustainability? Is it sustainable to let a child die? Is it worse to patronize them by telling them that their curandero was wrong and that Western doctors know the real answers? If I take Luis to the doctor, will I continue to reinforce their beliefs that white people will swoop in and rescue them? Is that sustainable? What should I do?

I carried Luis's swollen body down the mountain to a village three hours away with his mother and nursing baby hurrying behind me. There would not be a truck until the morning, but perhaps I could find a way out. When we arrived, I couldn't

believe my eyes. The governor was in the village with an entourage of government organizations and a traveling group of physicians. There must have been 20 trucks, and was that a helicopter?

I ran to the doctor. “Why have you waited so long to bring me this child?” Dr. Gonzalez scolded Luis’s mother Andrea. “He needs to go to the hospital, but it may be too late.”

“What is it?” I asked.

“He has Kwashiorkor. It is a protein deficiency caused by severe malnutrition.” Dr. Gonzalez replied.

“But, doctor, the family feeds the children.” I defended.

“See if you can get one of those trucks to take you to the hospital. There isn’t much time,” he urged without acknowledging my attempt to shield Andrea from the criticism.

I ran around frantically asking the government officials in their shiny white trucks to give me a ride down to the hospital. One after the other took a look at me, glanced at Luis, and said NO.

“I’m sorry, my dear, there is not enough gas.”

On a stage at the school, the charismatic governor addressed the cheering crowd:

“I am here to help the *Indigena*. I am not like the others who claim to support *los pobres*, but forget you after the election. I am your *representante*. *Yo soy uno de ustedes!*”

I walked past the guards onto the stage. Is he sincere? “May I borrow your helicopter, Governor?” I asked. The governor looked at me shocked and then looked at the crowd.

“Cuerpo de Paz!” Peace Corps, everyone! The crowd cheered as he smoothly shooed me off of the stage.

After an unsuccessful second attempt at finding a ride, I walked back on the stage while the governor and his assistants were starting to hand out Christmas presents to the children in the crowd. This time I whispered in his ear, “There is a way for you to help una indigena right now. Let me use your helicopter,” I pleaded.

The pilot dropped us off on the highway rather than taking us to the hospital ten minutes away. He said he must get back to the governor; he is a very busy man. I laid Luis on the side of the highway and flagged down an S.U.V.

“Please, can you take me to the hospital? The boy is sick,” I pointed to Luis.

The man reluctantly pulled over and let Andrea, the baby, Luis and I into the back of the car. As soon as we got in, the man’s wife began to gag. The smell of wood smoke, sweat, and poverty was strong in the confined space. She rolled down all of the windows and held her nose; I felt so ashamed.

They dropped us off at the hospital and sped away before we could say thank you. I walked through the doors of the crowded emergency room where I was hit with the time-stopping fluorescent lights. The receptionist was unmoved by the spectacle of the frazzled white girl carrying a sick indigenous child and pointed to the waiting room without a word. When Andrea tried to follow me, the receptionist glared at her and said, “No babies!” Andrea and the baby stayed behind and I walked through the door to the waiting room.

This time I used my diplomatic I.D., my brazen confidence, and my white skin to get some attention. Very sustainable, I thought to myself. I walked past the receptionist to the nurses’ station and asked to speak with a doctor. The nurse said she would get Luis a bed and find me a doctor, but when I turned around, she said to the other nurse, “Those people. Those *Indigena*. The drunken men steal the milk from the mothers’ breasts. Of course they let their children die. Yuck!”

Luis rested on the bed in the hallway where doctors and nurses brushed past him without a glance on their way to see other patients.

“Luis, I’m going to get you some soup,” I said brushing his thin hair off of his sweaty forehead. “I will be right back.” He looked up at me and smiled.

“Chicken?” He asked.

“Yes,” I said.

I asked family members of the other patients where I could get some food for Luis. All of them shrugged and pointed to the lunches they had brought in their plastic bags and baskets. I was discouraged and enraged at how no one wanted to help this sweet boy. “What is wrong with *these* people?” I asked myself. Then a motherly woman looked at me and said, “I will show you.” She took me out the front doors of the hospital and pointed to a little restaurant across the highway from the hospital. I asked her to watch Luis, thanked her, and ran through breaks in the hectic traffic to the restaurant.

I ordered some chicken soup to go, grabbed a few cookies, and a soda, and ran back to the hospital. Luis was still where I had left him. Still, no one had attended to him.

“Look, Luis,” I pointed. “Sopita.”

Luis looked at the soup and then at me. “But Tia, has my mother had soup yet?” He asked concerned.

Hmm, I thought to myself. Why doesn't the starving child just slurp it up?

“Yes,” I told him, “Mama already ate. Now it is your turn.”

“But, Tia, has mi abuelita had soup?”

“Yes,” I said. “Your grandmother has already eaten. Por favor, Luis, eat.”

“What about the doctors, Tia? Have they had soup?”

Oh, you mean the doctors who refuse to help you? Who blame your condition on your mother, your father, and your people? Who believes that you starve because your father greedily stole the milk from your mother's breasts?

“Yes, Luis.” I smiled to hide my bewilderment. “Los doctores also ate their soup.”

He points to the people in the beds and those who care for them, “*Y la gente?*”

“The people have all eaten, Luis,” I said as tears began to roll down my cheeks.

“Tia,” he looked up and pushed the soup to me, “sopita para ti.”

“Gracias, Luis,” I said as I took a bite of soup.

/ Miskwabikwe Yellowknife /

Other

To Lori

In the 60's there was no “multiracial” option on forms; the only choice was “other.” To me, this was ok, as back then, I did not know what I was. The inner city neighborhood where I had lived had many Hispanics and Italians; most of us were hungry, poor, and some shade of brown. I was just another ghetto kid. A curious child, I asked my mother what we were and she said “German.” When I repeated this to teachers, I was disciplined for lying. With my darkish skin, weird light eyes, thin Anglo face, Negroid nose, straight black hair, a mismatched accumulation of parts; I knew I was “other.”

My ideas of what family ought to be came from episodes of The Brady Bunch. Reality turned out to be very different. The year I turned 10, in 1970, my father was given custody of me and one brother. My mother had been legally declared an unfit parent the previous year. We went to live with my father, his second wife and her two children in a totally white Minneapolis suburb. I was overjoyed, thinking at last, I would live in a “normal” family.

Initially, I loved that I now had older siblings who just maybe, would watch over and protect me. I soon discovered they had problems of their own, including having me as a step sister. The first time I called my step brother “brother,” he screamed at me, “You are not my sister!, You are ugly!, I hate you!” and proceeded to throw me against the ground again and again. Over the years, his resentment and ill treatment escalated, but I never told anyone for fear of being sent back to the mother I had testified against. This was threatened whenever I was being “disobedient.”

As I became a teen ager and started high school, the situation worsened. Like all young women, I wanted to be liked, to be popular. However, a kid stuck in a deteriorating family and the sole “other” in the entire school was a poor candidate for inclusion in any clique.

Every day I had to face the “Idiot Brigade,” guys who stood by their lockers, watching the young women walk past and ranking them from 1 to 10. These were the “A-listers,” the cute guys every girl wanted to date. When I walked by, they shouted obscenities, “C%nt!, Ugly!, Bitch!”, they pushed me, spat in my hair. This did not

bother me so much (except the hair part) as I knew I was hated and being asked to the prom was highly unlikely. After all, jerks are jerks. What really angered me were the teachers and other adults who saw this and let it happen. A school counselor even said, “You will wind up as a welfare mother with two kids by age 20.” I began to withdraw from everyone both in school and the family. My grades suffered because I could not concentrate. Walking home late one night, I was attacked by three of the Idiot Brigade, they threw me to the ground, hit me, tried to rip off my shirt. I was able to scream, fight them off and ran away. I did not dare to report them as I knew my family would blame me and again, threaten to “send me back”. In an essay, I wrote at the time for a class assignment about my future, I described escaping rather than having a family, and how I would live in a cabin in the woods. The teacher was alarmed. Eventually I refused to ride the school bus, walking the 3 miles one way in any weather rather than having to deal with my “peers.” After two years of this, I was ready to drop out, and would have except I was only 14.

The year I turned 15, a number of events occurred that changed my life. An older student whose car I had helped fix in the school parking lot visited my home before she moved away and told me “I wish I could be as brave as you.” I remember three names at most out of the 200+ in my graduating class, but I will always remember hers: Lori. A handful of teachers understood my situation and actually seemed to care that I had a brain and that I was never, ever, going to be accepted by my classmates. They excused me from having to work in groups, letting me do individual projects. A music teacher gave me a practice room to use whenever I had the time. I learned from one teacher that my vocabulary was way above that of most teenagers and that I could write. He entered me in a college poetry contest where I placed in the top five. I wrote, practiced or read in the library, and then (with permission of one of these teachers) would skip study hall, cut through a field and walk home. I escaped into the world of books and music, and learned about the natural world.

I learned to become strong, both physically and emotionally, and gained a sort of power. My grades went from D’s and F’s to all A’s. I faced the “Idiot Brigade” by forcing myself to walk past them after every class, walking in dignity, holding my head high. Occasionally I would stop in front of one of them and stare back no matter what he said or did. The taunting eventually stopped. I learned to handle pain because it was necessary. When anyone, parent or step sibling hit me, I took it without flinching, looked them in the eye and said “hit me harder.” The hitting stopped.

The day after high school graduation, at age 17, I left with my brother, and headed north to live in a small house in the woods (no cabins were available). Since then there have been many cabins, all of them in the woods. I learned many things: to chop wood, to garden, to heal, to forgive.

I learned that many have experienced far worse things than I and about the persistence of “isms”.

Working my way through college in a nursing home, I learned about age-ism, the abandonment of our old.

I learned about life as a gay man in an ultra-conservative family from my friend George who attempted suicide when we were in college; later he succeeded.

I learned about the lives of poor whites and how White Privilege does not always apply to those who are white.

While in graduate school, I finally learned “what” I was with the help of on-line genealogy and a bit of familial honesty. I learned why my family tried so hard to be middle class and white: Fear. My father had witnessed race riots as a young man and it terrified him. Not all of us fight back. At a time when many men in his situation abandoned their children, perhaps he did the best he could. Rather than teaching one’s children what to be, some parents teach you what not to be.

Today, I learn about the lives and stories of the so-called “illegals” in my community, what and who they had to leave behind. Our country’s laws, the same country that calls them “illegal” (how can a human being be “illegal” anyway?!), creates the situation that causes my neighbors to flee for their lives. From them I learn what it is like to live in constant fear. Perhaps because I am clearly an “other,” or perhaps because I listen, their children tell me their stories: relatives with serious health problems who are afraid to see a doctor; people with diabetes unable to afford healthy food; students who cannot afford textbooks, gas to get to their jobs, or out-of-state tuition. This is where I put what I have learned into practice. Stuff gets paid for, basic medical advice is given, and food gets to where it needs to go. No names, no questions asked.

As a sort of elder, I talk to these young people, especially the young women and girls, about what they can do for themselves, and how for them as it was for me, education is their way out.

I try to teach them to hold their heads high, keep strong, and walk with dignity, and hopefully, never, ever, have to feel like an “other.”

/ Scott Frost /

Lagrimas en las Escaleras - Tears on the Stairs

Luz sat crying on the steps of las hermanas hospital in Juarez. The sun baked concrete drank in her tears with no trace of moisture left behind, as if they had never really fallen, but they had.

Her sister Alicia's perfume still hung in the air and her arms still ached from the awkward hug they had shared as a result of the babies they each carried inside them, although neither one would be pregnant for long. Her Sister's child would be born 'al otro lado', on the other side, A U.S Citizen, but she herself could not make the journey across the desert. When her water broke that morning, she frantically called her husband Arturo to ask what she should do. "Stay there! Use the money to pay the hospital, I will see you and "Diesyocho" soon enough and I will find a way to bring you here with me". "Diesyocho" was a nickname they had given the unborn child since it had taken eighteen double shifts at the meat packing plant in Nebraska where he worked to raise enough money to pay a Coyote to bring her across the border.

She watched Alicia walk away up the dirty street and felt a new fear mingle with the terror she already tasted every time she swallowed. "Would she make it across? Would the Coyote use her vulnerable condition to cheat her out of the money her husband Luis had sent to her from working in the Potato fields of Idaho in order that they both might travel together? After all, they were only a few days apart in the pregnancies, what if *her* time was to come out in the God-forsaken desert that had taken so many immigrant lives before them? She fought back the urge to call out to her, begging her to stay with her in Juarez until both babies arrived, but she knew the answer. A child born "al otro lado" was automatically a citizen. Even if separated from its parents (which did not happen, she was told) it would have a life of opportunity, a life of privilege compared to the stark poverty and danger found en el "narco corridor" of Chihuahua state. The most powerful contraction yet caused her to struggle up off the step and check herself in. She paid the bill in advance with sweat stained \$100.00 bills and felt the irony as she was wheeled down the sanitized hallway; the only child in her family to be born in a hospital would come into this world just a few hundred yards on the wrong side of El Rio Grande.

Anita loved playing with her cousin Olivia on the trampoline they shared, except for one thing; Olivia would not remove her socks, and sometimes they were very dirty. In fact, Olivia did not take her socks off at all except to bathe, and then she immediately covered her feet in clean fresh calsitenes before getting dressed. She would then wear those socks to bed and to school and to play on the trampoline and not change them till her next bath. When Anita finally decided to ask her favorite cousin about it, she was not surprised by the answer. "If the Migra (Immigration) comes for me, I want to have socks on..." They were exactly seven days apart and had heard the story many times of how Anita's mother had nearly died in the desert, but was able to get as far north as Espanola New Mexico before the child in her would wait no more, While Olivia was born in an air conditioned room in Juarez, but then nearly died herself cruzando la frontera as a tiny infant in her fragile mothers arms. They were inseparable, as were their parents who had pooled resources in order to start a construction company in a resort town in Colorado. They grew up strong and beautiful, but the sock thing was not the only difference between them. Anita traveled freely back and forth to visit their relatives in Mexico, but Olivia could never get anywhere near the border for fear of deportation. They both spoke perfect English and preferred it to Spanish. They were both excellent students, but when Olivia won the spelling bee, she could not go compete at the national level for lack of a birth certificate- Anita went in her place. It was right after their joint Quinciniera that things got really bad- Drivers education classes had been a breeze for both of them, but only Anita could apply for a learners permit.

She put the question to her father as delicately as she knew how..."Papi, what would it take for me to get papers so I don't have to worry about getting deported?" Arturo de la Rosa stiffened in his recliner. It had been many years since he had worked in the meat packing plants, but his stomach was still knotted with muscle and he felt every one tense up when the words left the lips of his beautiful Diesyocho. "Mija, no es tan facil, its not so simple" he said in a tender voice that he hoped masked the fear he felt. "I could use the money I made selling biscochitos to the Gringas at wal-mart last Christmas" she offered, but the expression on his face told her to be quiet. He leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees and clasped his hands together in a position that he normally used only when discussing important business matters with her tio Luis. "Livita, he said, using his very most special pet name for her, You know that it's not the money..." And she did know that, her father and her uncle had done very well in building lives for them, starting with nothing but desire and sweat in a land that offered men like that the opportunity to become wealthy. It was the opportunity to be part of that land, *legally* part of that land, which she wanted more than anything.

Olivia set in the window seat of the bus bound for El Paso, waving goodbye to the family gathered outside in the thickening snowstorm. The abogado who had agreed to take the case had said that even though she had not willingly come into the country illegally, the law was still very clear: before her eighteenth birthday She would have to return to Mexico for one year, than apply for a hardship visa which, if everything went perfect, would be approved within a few months, and she would be back in Colorado in time to take advantage of the scholarship she had won to CSU. She was the first in her family to be born in a hospital, and would be the first to attend college. The last face she saw was that of her father, and it was wet with tears.

She awoke as the bus pulled into the terminal at sunland park, New Mexico. Looking out the window, she saw the terrible green suburbans used by the I.N.S and for a second, she panicked but then she remembered what her uncle had told her “No preocupas, linda, don’t worry, they only care about wetbacks coming into the country, not about the crazy ones like you, going back” and then he burst out laughing.

It turns out, he was only partly right. Even though the bus was southbound, the agents had boarded the bus with their flashlights and badges, calling out in their terrible Spanish:

“ill-ley-gal-ayes? any ill-ley-gal-ayes on board?” Olivia did not know what to do. She had planned on crossing the bridge into Juarez on foot, than taking a bus to her grandmother’s house in Cuatehmoc. Believing anything American to be basically trustworthy, She raised her hand and said “I am going to mexico, I have no papers.” The agent was caught off guard, then examining her athletic figure and long brown hair, he said “Oh yea, you’re going to Mexico alright, but not on this bus”. She screamed for the first time as the second agent slammed the Suburban door shut. Her childhood nightmare came true as the vehicle she had lived in fear of all her life carried her off into the dark desert night. Later, she learned how bad a nightmare could be. At noon the next day she limped across the bridge into ciudad Juarez. She was barefoot; her socks somewhere out in the desert with her shattered spirit. Dried blood crusted on her inner thighs. In the heat of the afternoon, she found what she was looking for: Las Hermanas Hospital. If those beasts had planted a seed in her, she wanted it out, and she needed desperately to be clean.

Before going inside, she sat on the steps and allowed herself to cry, and the sun baked concrete drank in her tears with no trace of moisture left behind, as if they had never really fallen – but they had.

Challenging
Injustice
Contest

Visual
Arts

First Place

/ Zach Brace /

On the Cross



Second Place

/ Jury Jerome /

Occupy



Third Place

/ Cristian Acosta /

One for All



/ Rachel Curry /

Motion in Stillness



General
Entries

Creative
Writing

/ Gail Smith /

Ecosystem Services - Haiku

Provisioning - Water

Standing by the stream
All that is green is living
Each leaf points outward

Regulating – pollination

Dust from tiny grains
Insects make their efforts known
Brilliant flowers thrive

Cultural – spiritual

Flakes of snow falling
A winter prayer for all
The night falls over

Supporting – Photosynthesis

Photosynthesis
Unseen chemical changes
Makes food for the plant

/ Robyn Washburn /

Flower Fairies

A child's fascination for the wildwood
 where the flower fairies were sticky in my hands.
 I flipped buds to make ball gowns
 where fairies danced at the dream plantation.
 Fondly watching my adults gather round fire,
 reverence: the sacrament of inhalation.
 They rolled my dancers in brown paper,
 such grown up arts and crafts,
 sacrament burning in their fingers.
 Magic flower fairies, please make my adults smile.
 Turn their inner kaleidoscopes,
 let them see my world of waiting love.
 Their eyes translating fragrant shapes in light,
 ears rocking to deep T.H.C. waves,
 at least until their exhales faded.
 I kept this one thing, this small good thing.
 They had nothing else to give.
 It would've been rude to demur
 to the lion, the weed and the botanical wardrobe.

/ Robyn Washburn /

Marco Polo

She was sixteen when she came down with the pregnancy. After she remembered to inhale again, she realized her boyfriend was a liar *and* those Nuns had held back need-to-know information she would have used. To be fair “hold the pill diligently between your knees” should have sent up some sensible flares, but before sixteen she did not question adults much.

She had not imagined he would choose cocaine when she was standing right there. Her Beloved had looked into her ocean eyes and said, “Its you-pregnant-swollen grotesquely-or flying in deep cocaine-and O baby I can't *stand* babies.” She hated what drugs did to the people she loved. Pregnant, dumped by her love, it was her day for sharp revelations.

Beloved left only because the lease was in her name and he could not toss her out; she knew he'd really liked the address. It was on a coveted street, old money, shabby chic. He'd liked the way it labeled him as city savvy. She got another job, and, ready set go, she was a single unwed and discarded mother. She understood she was shame, undeserving of love or community.

She wept the great salt lake for him, until she thought about it rationally, and that day she renamed him “slime boy”.

It would be lovely to say she took to motherhood like a bear. Her baby was so small and constant and tedious. She called him Joe. To her it seemed Joe ate, Joe shat, Joe cried, Joe was her penance -- for questionable pleasure. She had recently been informed that if you had to ask, it probably wasn't an orgasm.

But she was a responsible Catholic girl and accepted, nay, submitted to the will of another disappointing male, and tended to her baby extremely well-protected mothering. Baby Joe was lying in his basket, clean and shiny, studying her completely with his secrets-of-the-universe eyes. He had an engaging, gummy smile she refused to be engaged by. Males were temptation that ended badly for her. For the love of a sweet baby, deliver us not into temptation. Disappointed and sleep deprived, she set out to out-stare him and instead, she tripped forever into mother-love.

She wondered if Joe had known she would come around to him. Maybe he really was privy to those secrets. Joe was the perfect male; why had she not seen that? He gifted her with the sure knowledge that she was vital-root, blossom and fruit, the

whole world with no cocaine distractions.

When Joe was ten months old, slime boy came back and stole Joe away. Slime boy had come back to see the old place, delight in her struggle, maybe get a bygone lay. Instead he had seen them at the park, glowing. There was no evidence of suffering; he was clearly not missed, which enraged him. He instinctively knew the perfect revenge. It was easy enough to wait on the fire escape for them to sleep, break the lock on the window, and slime off with her cub.

Joe's absence instantly woke her. Not finding him in his basket shattered her shiny new world, reduced their wholeness to her shards that sharpened with each lost moment. Eventually, instead of air, there was only pain to breathe in her broken new world.

"Its for the best," her society said. She was clearly too young for the adult responsibility of a baby. They did not see that for better or worse she became old enough the day the stick turned blue.

Where in the world was he? Slime boy, with his red passport and diplomatic connections got around. Could she blindly gravitate to Joe? Marco... Polo... the call in her mother's soul pulling her toward her lost baby. It was a crazy way to go, but she had to believe, and like a shark, she needed to keep moving forward or stop this jagged breathing.

She searched every person she'd met with slime boy; sometimes they gave her a direction. She dragged herself through each day, dying yet unwilling to die. Her hope was a whip that stung her onward.

She, in increments, hitched rides from Manhattan to Rio de Janeiro, where the pink and silver foliage stopped her numb. Like a hunting dog, she scented the air, felt Joe calling her, his little Polo... almost lost in the crazy strip of city where his grandmother lived. His grandmother smiled when she saw who stood below the nine story window calling "Marco". "Always such an odd girl" Joe's grandmother would murmur as she rang the hunting mother in. The grandmother with her disillusioned eyes, explained. "My son, my beautiful son, left his son here like a stray because it was too hard; the baby was inconsolable. He made me promise not to contact you. My son swore to me, his own mother, that he'd take the baby from give and me him to the first woman he met on the street. I took his vow and had hope that you would one day find us." Grandmother held her grandchild out to his mother. Holding him again she held the world, her baby Joe like treasure, like sweet breathing, like a bandage to her heart. They smiled whole,

Into each other, home.

/ Danielle Laird /

Painfully Peaceful

Loud, big with fury
 Red broken fists assaulting the air
 I will breathe one day
 The emptiness brings me down
 Dark and alone feeling heavy
 Ignored and quiet I bare hate
 A vigorously hopeless cry
 To one day be whole
 Naturally calm, one step in front of the other
 Amber is the shade to share

Satori

Radiant showers falling from the core. Source of life beaming bright.
 My tenderness stands abrupt, soaking in the happiness of the soil.
 Toes connected in spirit, we are one.

Our mother brings good, bad, evil.
 Entangled foundations heaving in your sight.
 Frolicking intensely, dreaming of untouched antiquity.

This is my world, building from heart, choices we make, can't sink me down.
 Light as the breeze, heavy as the ground. Thrusting on.
 I'm safe for now.

/ Nicholas Gary /

Low on the Sheets, I Long for the Sea

A bitter breeze rolls in
as the leaves begin to burn
salt in the brisk air
moving us through

watching the leaves turn
longing for tides
in this thin air
so far from her

lying in the tides
the flavor of her breath
so far from her
we've found ourselves lost

the heat of her breath
low on the sheets
we've found ourselves parted
I long for her shore

warm under the sheets
we'll fear no cool night
longing for your shore
I lie awake

/ Nicholas Gary /

Feast

Our days forgotten lie subtle like
The curvature of your lasting form

The rule of chemical grip
engulfing the strands that connect us

Starving to fulfill this craving
elated for what only seemed a moment

A slow waltz down this broad trail
Narrowed with our every step

History clings to your naked feet

/ Julie Albrecht /

Alternative Ode to a Rocky Mountain Town

Carbondale without a car
This is who and what we are
Getting' around on a board or a bike
Young or old perhaps a trike

Here in Carbondale
There is an ethic that prevails
Of living our lives with respect for the earth
At least we try, for what it's worth

Center of the universe
That's what we say, chapter and verse
Some think our town is just heaven on earth
And I agree, not just in mirth

'Cause, from Mount Sopris' verdant flanks
Rivulets and streamlets flow
Crystal and the Roaring Fork and on to Mexico

**Not
'Cause**

Water diversion's a fact of life
And it causes lots of strife
Farmers and ranchers and city and towns
And developments abound

Green grass, clean clothes
This is where the water goes
Fodder for cattle and veggies for us
Water usage is a must

John Wesley Powell said it best and he said it first
"Don't send people to the west for they will die of thirst"

But

We haven't paid that piper yet
We found the aquifers beneath
And the waters do still flow
From the lovely snowy peaks

But those aquifers you know
Took like a million years to form
And we've sucked them nearly dry
In just a hundred and a score

So riding our bikes and not using gas
Does not give us all a pass
Because water issues - the water we use
Will soon trump everything else that we do

The Carbondale Limerick

Carbondale is a town in the Rockies
And the people that live there are cocky
The folks from the coasts, are jealous, we boast
That just living here makes us feel lucky.

/ Andy Schoeneman /

Waiting for Toto

Our courage, heart, and brain
 We have won.
 But Dorothy has left us,
 And there is
 Nothing to be done.

We have given in to the crowd,
 And we don't know our true selves.
 What is *en-soi* to Munchkins
 May be pour-soi to elves.

Asked Tin Woodsman to Lion,
 "Don't you think life is absurd?
 Just look at your foot --
 You've stepped in Toto's turd!"

Their cruel, sneering laughter
 Greeted the Lion's dolor.
 "The problem is," declared Scarecrow,
 "That we are appearing in color."

"Hollywood leaves out the existential vitals.
 Our next film must be black and white."
 "And in Swedish!"
 "With subtitles!"

"Well, shall we go?," asked the Lion.
 "I thought you'd approved."
 "Yes, let's go," they agreed.
 But none of them moved.

/ Suzanne Thompson /

Harmonica Spit

People speak of wine and its bouquet and it seems to be a highly respectable topic and these people have a great deal of pride in their ability to swirl the wine and see its tears and put their nose to the glass and sniff, swish the wine in their mouth and spit, count how long the aftertaste lasts and discern and discuss these differences with dry decorum.

But no one ever talks about harmonica spit.
 It's a much more elite and intimate subject, with far more interesting varietals.

Harmonica spit always tastes like the last time you played it.
 That taste, balanced with a flinty metallic tingle.
 Harmonious.

I am in my mini cooper, heading up Tennessee Pass on the way to Leadville.
 I find my b harp in the console and I begin to play and it tastes like the egg McMuffin I had yesterday on my way to work when I was playing along with Joan Baez as she sang *Bonnie Barbara Allen*.

I reach for my c harp in the glove box and play *Bright Side of the Road* with Van Morrison and I taste the cherry chapstick that I borrowed from John last month when it was the end of the warm autumn days and we were hiking up an ancient Ute trail and stopped to have some water and a song.

I dig my f harp out of my purse. Unlike my other harmonicas, the insides of this one are made of wood, not plastic. Past the texture of unknown particles and grit that were at the bottom of my bag, it tastes like dr. pepper, the sugar and carbonation now stale have bonded with the wood pulp.

I once lost this f harp and found it in my life vest pocket with my wetsuit in the garage at the beach. I had taken it kayaking in the ocean and forgotten about it.

It tasted of saltwater and wood,
and reminded me of the dolphins I had seen that day,
the sound they returned to me with the air they expelled from their blowholes
and how it smelled like fish.

I try not to get too sloppy when I play, but it's inevitable.
One time I was trying to keep up with Bob Dylan's *Don't Think Twice, It's All Right*
and inhaled some harmonica spit.
I got a respiratory infection and had to take a round of antibiotics.

That's nothing compared to all the drunk driving arrests my friend the wine connois-
seur has had to endure.
People never talk about harmonica spit.

It's only for a select few.

It's always a private tasting,
always an extraordinary vintage.

/ Jacob Wherry /

Mutual Benevolence

He sat on the leather sofa, legs up, body being swallowed by the worn cushions as if his frame had been imprinted permanently after years of extended use. He was watching football and a documentary on world war two, resting a Corona on his belly button with one hand, dangling the remote over the edge of the couch with the other. He liked to be consumed in the achievements of our ancestors, with their primitive weaponry and overflow of courage - their triumphs allowed him to pour imported beer into his system and do absolutely nothing, if he pleased. And he did please.

He watched with an unchanging expression. Relaxed - comatose. I wondered if he was actually watching, or maybe sleeping, and if it were possible to pry the remote out of his fingers, one by one, to possibly change the channel to something more enjoyable. Yet, without hesitation, his hand would contract, fumbling to change the channel as soon as the featured presentation was interrupted by commercials. I hated football. I hated history. Yet, i didn't dare to say so, as my father would probably accuse me of being a liberal pussy and banish me to my room, where he'd expect me to be watching Michael Moore documentaries and be tainted by evil, evil, liberal propaganda. I am not of the age to understand what 'liberal' means, yet I am convinced again and again that they have evolved, sharper teeth and a menacing sense of rage, and will willingly quench their thirst with my blood. They are selfish, evil, faithless bastards and Americas problems can be pinned on them. Football is interrupted as a member of the opposing team has ruptured something in his ankle, and is probably going to die. My father looks incredibly pleased, feeling the power of his state coarse through him. We were able to do this. We injured the raiders!!! What a great state we live in.....

Commercials come on. First, it's something about beer, followed by a car advertisement. My father is either too intrigued or forgetful that history is waiting to be learned, for he doesn't change the channel. He sits there, new corona in hand, staring at the television as if it were static. The next commercial begins with a sullen depiction of the African Safari. The bloody sun paints everything crimson. The land looks sad. It's bleeding. The image fades to the face a starving African child. Flies are circling the bare cheekbones as if they are as hungry as the child itself, yet can find

no nutrition in the child's sweat. The voice of a caring, distressed, American woman begins to speak. "You can save this child's life."

In an obnoxious stir my father sits up, grumbles, and changes the channel. He returns to watching old rifles fire precisely into gook territory, resounding with the stomach turning sound of penetrating flesh. He forgets the small African child and is at peace. His country is good again; he can drink without the knowledge of suffering; without realizing the damages that capitalism could prevent if it weren't so centered around individual benefit. The Mexicans can deal with their own problems; with the drug cartels and violence. The Africans - with their starvation and genocide. North Korea can be oppressed. Children can be chained to never see sunlight; to be ravaged by angry powerful men. "They can all starve; They can all burn. They were geographically unfortunate, and therefore, they are on their own. Deport them all, one by one. They aren't American; They aren't people. Why should these social parasites reap the benefits of a country they aren't apart of? It would be degrading to do for them what they could do for themselves. I'm American. This is my country"

He sits on the leather sofa, buzzed from imported beer, smiling at the thought of what a great country he lives in. The world is tormented; America is great. I don't want to be here anymore.

/ Kurt Morris /

There Is No Such Thing as a Free Art Show

Each slice is a statement. The hand carves away scraps between the seen and unseen with the motor function of a seasoned ER doctor. Hours of persistence fueled by imagination strive for perfection, push numb fingers to create a skeleton.

The skeleton is covered and the journey begins. Under world acrobatics are skills required for travel. Hours line the bricks leading to your perfect spot. Skyscraper walls frame the transformation from sunny fat cats into nocturnal sewer rats. The final destination rests on ground so fertile the seeds of imagination have begun to show.

Upon reaching this destination, the fear flashes red white and blue lights through the brain. Bones hidden for so long, now outline the layers of a landmark masterpiece. The hiss of spray paint signals construction has begun. Paint spatters its mark of rebellion swooshing north south east west. Individual drops of color cut like a razor, strengthened by mass, society's death of a thousand razors.

The paint dries like reality, leaving a visibly constructed form standing tall; however its shadow cast questions. Where have all the good guys gone? Why do the few get to dictate what is acceptable by the rest? How long will this image last? Should a dollar determine what is carved in stone and what is sketched upon the sand?

General
Entries

Visual
Arts

/ Jury Jerome /

Abstraction



/ Jury Jerome /
Taylor's Eyes



/ Hannah Glover /
Aspen Spin



/ Zach Brace /

Orb Reflection



/ Zach Brace /

Reflections in Nature



/ Brian Roecker /
Ice Garden



/ Guadalupe Laiz /
Friends



/ Guadalupe Laiz /
Horse Gaze



/ Bianca Mattern McCarty /
Black Mare



/ Bianca Mattern McCarty /

Horses Leave Foot Prints on Your Heart



/ Amy Bluestar Painter /

Live in the Moment



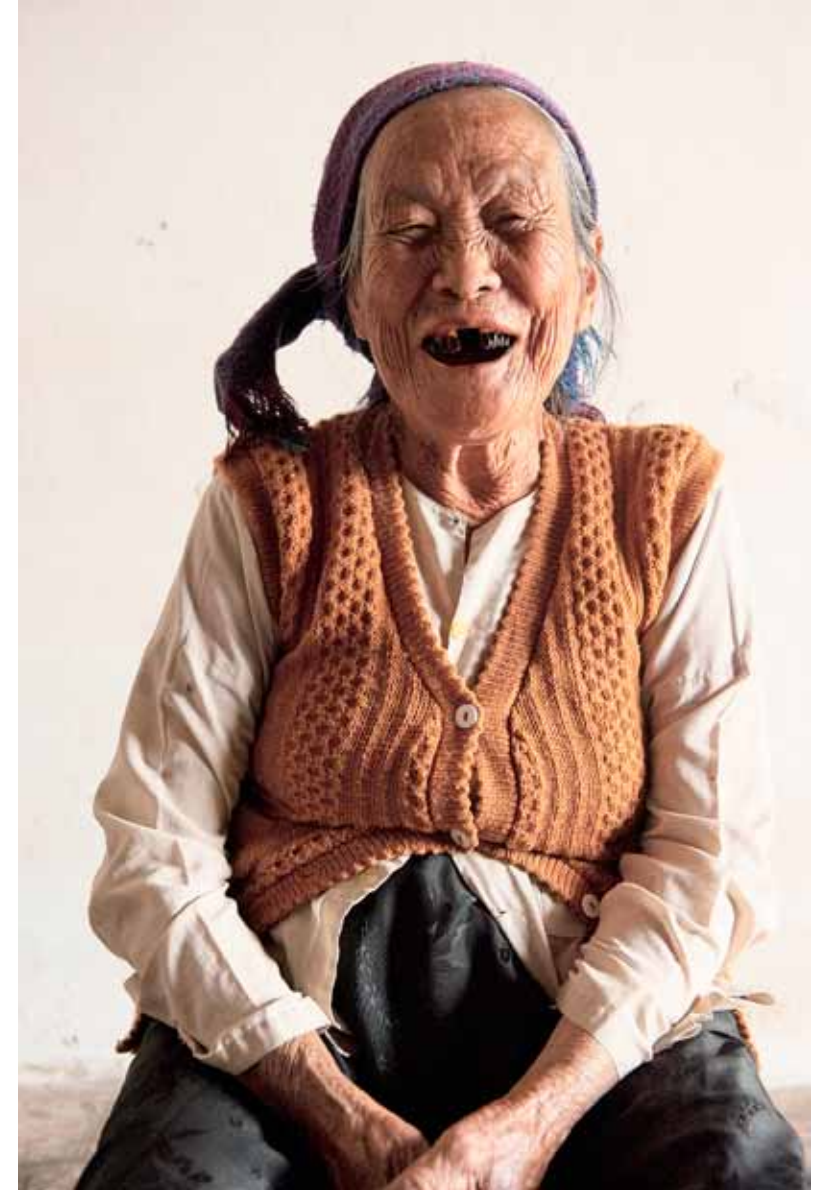
/ Allen G. Davenport /

A Walk Across Time



/ Allen G. Davenport /

Wisdom in Those Teeth



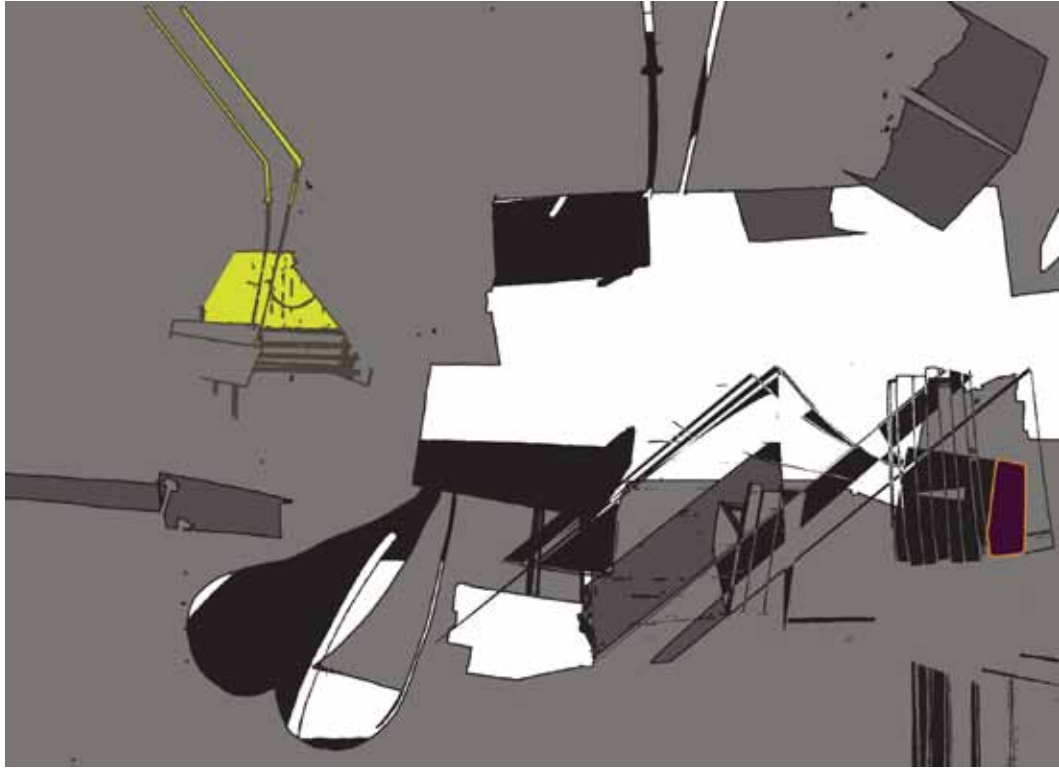
/ Rennie (Renata Marshall) /
Chinese Girl



/ Rennie (Renata Marshall) /
Still Life With a Chair



/ Lindsay Jones /
Untitled



/ Lindsay Jones /
Mixed Media Drawing from "Unpossessed Places"



/ Lindsay Jones /
Homegrown



Contributors

Literary Arts

Julie Albrecht
Janna Burk
Aaron Childers
Scott Frost
Nicholas Gary
Danielle Laird
Conor Ross Laing
Kelli McCall
Laurel McHargue
Kurt Morris
Deb Quinn
Andy Schoeneman
Gail Smith
Suzanne Thompson
Timothy J. Warrens
Robyn Washburn
Jacob Wherry
Miskwabikwe Yellowknife

Visual Arts

Cristian Acosta
Zach Brace
Rachel Curry
Allen G. Davenport
Hannah Glover
Jury Jerome
Lindsay Jones
Guadalupe Laiz
Bianca Mattern McCarty
Amy Bluster Painter
Rennie (Renata Marshall)
Brian Rocker